

REPORT

Parks & Recreation

To: Mayor Johnstone and Members of Council
Date: October 16, 2023

From: Dean Gibson, Director of Parks and Recreation
File: 2361730

Item #: 2023-647

Subject: **2023 Outdoor Pool Operations Highlights and 2024 Outdoor Pool Season Operating Plan**

RECOMMENDATION

THAT this report be received for information.

PURPOSE

This report provides a summary of the 2023 outdoor pool operations, introduces plans for the 2024 outdoor pool operating season, and highlights the interdependencies that exist between the operation of the outdoor pools and aquatic services at tēmāsewtx^w Aquatic and Community Centre.

BACKGROUND

In 2023, Moody Park Outdoor Pool operated from April 22 to October 1, and Hume Park Outdoor Pool from May 20 to October 1. This operational schedule marked the second consecutive year of extended outdoor pool operations. The decision to extend the outdoor pool operating seasons was necessitated by the permanent closure of the Canada Games Pool in late 2021/early 2022, which resulted in a significant gap in the delivery of recreational services to the community. The City's spray parks and Grimston Park wading pool also augment the outdoor pool experience.

The continuity of the extended season for 2023, along with the refinement of various City practices, particularly the reservation system (pre-registration vs. drop-in entry), were shaped by the public engagement responses to the *Outdoor Pools: 2022 Season*

Feedback Survey. The results of this survey were provided and discussed at the February 27, 2023 meeting of Council.

At the commencement of the 2023 operating season the aquatic services team saw 34 of 46 staff returning to seasonal employment. The 2023 operational season saw the aquatics lifeguard team grow from 34 to 64 active employees through aggressive recruitment efforts and the introduction of the Scholarship Training Employment Program (S.T.E.P.). As the staff team expanded, new registered program offerings at the outdoor pools were able to be created. Aquatic department staff are aiming to triple the staffing complement in 2024 to reach adequate staffing levels to operate all aquatic facilities (both outdoor and indoor). The recruitment process will continue over fall 2023 and winter 2024 with S.T.E.P. opportunities resuming in spring 2024.

DISCUSSION

Highlights from the 2023 Outdoor Pool Extended Season

Attendance from the 2023 outdoor pool season are listed in the tables below noting that “reserved swimming” references leisure, lane and aquafit sessions, and “registered programs” references swimming lessons only. Registered swimming lessons consistently operated near maximum capacity throughout the seasons. The department’s ability to expand registered swimming lesson programs was limited primarily by the availability of instructor staff and physical limitations of the facilities.

Fundamentally, the success of the extended season largely relied on weather conditions. While the summer months saw many sessions reaching capacity during peak hours, the majority of the swims in the shoulder season and swims outside of peak hours in the summer had capacity.

Spring, Summer and Fall 2023 – Moody Park Pool					
Service	Season	Weekly Service Hours	Max capacity	Actual attendance	Utilized capacity
Reserved Swimming (aquafit, lane swimming and leisure swims)	*Spring	66.25 hrs.	28,062	10,120	37%
	**Summer	69.25 hrs.	27,934	15,154	54%
	***Fall	63.75 hrs.	11,813	1,983	17%
Registered programs (swim lessons)	*Spring	9 hrs.	861	821	95%
	**Summer	9.5 hrs.	861	839	97%
	***Fall	8.5 hrs.	241	239	99%

*Spring – April, May and June.
**Summer – includes September long weekend.
***Fall – Statistics up to October 1, 2023.

Spring, Summer and Fall 2023 – Hume Park Pool					
Service	Season	Weekly Service Hours	Max capacity	Actual attendance	Utilized capacity
Reserved Swimming (aquafit, lane swimming and leisure swims)	*Spring	13.5 hrs.	663	160	24%
	**Summer	66 hrs.	18,371	7,446	41%
	***Fall	29.75 hrs.	2,731	189	7%
Registered programs (swim lessons)	*Spring	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	**Summer	11 hrs.	453	433	96%
	***Fall	4 hrs.	56	49	88%

*Spring – May 20 – June 30. Pool was only open on weekends during this period.

**Summer – includes September long weekend.

***Fall – Statistics up to October 1, 2023.

2024 – Aquatic Services Planning - Staffing resources a limiting factor

The aquatic services team continues to work on strategies to recruit, hire and retain new staff over the fall and winter in preparation for the 2024 operational season. Spring 2024 will be first time since 2021 that both indoor and outdoor swimming will be available to the community. This will include additional challenges created by the need to hire and train aquatics staff for the new t̄m̄əsew̄tx^w Aquatic and Community Centre (TACC). Aquatic services at TACC are scheduled to commence in mid-May, with a grand opening on June 1st. Complementing the new services at TACC is the summer opening of Moody Park Outdoor Pool, Hume Park Outdoor Pool and the Grimston Park Wading Pool. These multiple and concurrent service offerings are expected to create unprecedented pressure on the recruitment and training process for aquatics staff.

Aquatic Services staff will be relocating to TACC to establish the facility for staff training and development in April 2024. During this period, senior supervisory staff will play a crucial role in facilitating the onboarding and training of new staff while also becoming familiar with the new facility. The entirety of spring (April – June) will be dedicated to staff recruitment, training, and development efforts. It is worth noting that the aquatics sector continues to face lifeguard shortages, and we anticipate competition between regional municipalities for qualified staff. Due to these challenges, including limited staff resources, staff are planning to revert to more traditional outdoor pool operating schedules in 2024, as detailed in the following section of this report.

NEXT STEPS

In the face of ongoing lifeguard shortages and the number of aquatic facilities requiring concurrent staffing across the region, the 2024 outdoor pool schedule will see a return towards a more traditional outdoor pool season (i.e. mid-June to Labour Day). The extent of staff shortages may impact the City's ability to fully staff all outdoor facilities next year. To ensure the successful opening of t̄m̄əsew̄tx^w Aquatic and Community Centre, outdoor pool 2024 schedules will be developed based on 2023 attendance patterns, seasonal

weather, and staffing availability. In addition, employing a dynamic scheduling approach (flexible operating schedules vs. fixed operating schedule) may be necessary to reconcile and balance the operating schedules at TACC and the outdoor pools as a result of staff availability.

2024 Outdoor Pool Operational Season

Outdoor pool facilities will open for the summer of 2024. Moody Park Pool will operate from June 15 to September 2nd. Hume Park Pool and Grimston Park wading pool will operate from June 29 to September 2nd. Community spray parks will open as usual on the Victoria Day long weekend and operate through to September 28th, 2024. Should weather patterns in 2024 dictate, the spray park season can be extended.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The 2024 operating plan is in alignment with the proposed operating budget for aquatic services in 2024, which returns outdoor pools to pre-Covid operations. Aquatic services staff will utilize the designated dates of operation as a foundation for crafting a detailed schedule for the 2024 season.

In 2023, staff proposed to build upon the 2022 extended season by adding four extra weeks to outdoor pool operations. The 2023 extended season required an operating budget subsidy of \$200K in addition to the \$321K base budget subsidy for regular outdoor pool operations (pre-Covid). The \$200K additional operating budget subsidy was offset by incremental rental and program revenues estimated at \$25K and the remainder was managed through re-allocation of 2023 operating budget, mainly from savings associated with the closure of the Canada Games Pool.

With the opening of TACC in 2024, the outdoor pool operating budget subsidy is no longer able to be managed through the re-allocation of the operating budget. Accordingly, operating schedules have been established to fit within historical budgets.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL LIAISON

This report was prepared with the involvement of staff from the Parks and Recreation and Finance Departments.

OPTIONS

Options for Council's consideration include:

- 1. Receive this report for information.
- 2. Provide staff with additional comment or direction.

Option #1 is recommended.

CONCLUSION

The 2024 aquatic services operating plan aligns with the proposed 2024 outdoor pool operating budget. Identified risks to the 2024 plan and operating schedules include the industry-wide lifeguard shortages, competition among municipalities vying for the same staff resources in preparation for the summer season, and timing considerations for onboarding and concurrent training of new staff for the TACC operation and outdoor pool opening. Aquatic services will attempt to mitigate staffing and timeline challenges by creative and streamlined staff recruitment and training processes, and by establishing options for flexible operating schedules that are responsive to staffing levels at given points in time.

APPROVALS

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